

February 23, 1968

Mr. William L. Scurrah
4921 Logan Avenue, South
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55409

Dear Mr. Scurrah:

The most detailed treatment of parthenogenesis in higher organisms is a little book by R. A. Beatty "Cambridge Monographs in Experimental Biology - 7: Parthenogenesis and Polyploidy in Mammalian Development". There is also an interesting essay by Helen Spurway that appeared in the British magazine New Statesman and Nation for November 19, 1955 at page 651.

For my part the IMMACULATE CONCEPTION is hardly a scientific issue since by its very nature it would have to be regarded as *miraculous*, a unique event in the history of nature whereas science is concerned with the reproducible.

It would always be possible to invoke a more elaborate explanation for a higher order exception, like a male product of parthenogenesis. I do not know how to weight the relative plausibility of hypothetical unique events but there are several schemes, similar to the one you proposed, that could be thought of. In particular I would have to point out that there is no detailed biological analysis of the characterization of Jesus Christ as a male. Nor is there any particular reason to insist on His belonging to any of the conventional human categories. This comment may be at variance with many established traditions but we should keep in mind that these are mainly the product of speculation by ordinary mortals who have taken for granted the superiority of the male. The same traditions rather than any objective evidence have typed Jesus as of the Caucasian race.

If you know of any thoughtful exegetical analysis of the biological characterization of Jesus Christ not too far

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removed from the original language of the New Testament
I would be interested to hear of it. But as I have already
indicated I do not see any important connection between
analytical biology and theology.

Sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg,
Professor of Genetics

JL/gem